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**NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY  
JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE  
JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL**



**BRIDGING THE SAN FRANCISCO SYSTEM:  
21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE  
ASIAN-PACIFIC**

**By**

**Robert A. Shelton**

*Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Air Force*

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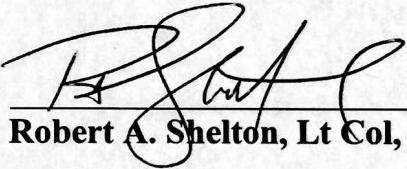
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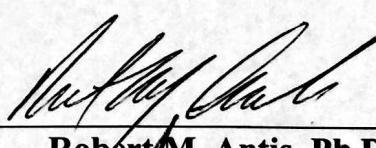
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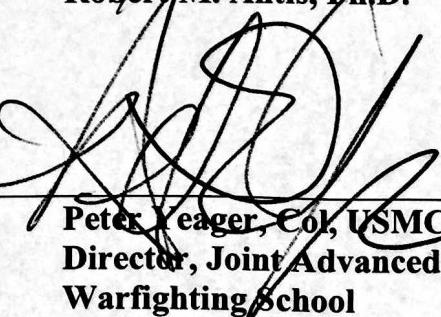
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## **ABSTRACT**

In the wake of World War II and in the earliest moments of a dawning Cold War, the United States sought the opportunity for lasting peace through the diplomatic arrangements and alliances it established to provide stability and security. In the Asian-Pacific, binding America to NATO-like Article 5 conditions that levied a definitive military commitment would not work. Instead, the United States burdened itself with the disproportionate security and economic burdens of key bilateral alliances that grew to embody the “San Francisco System.” The United States offered itself as a powerful trade partner with unfettered access to Western free world markets under the umbrella of U.S.-provided security in exchange for strategic regional influence and defense positioning.

As the geopolitical environment evolved and foreign policy shifted over the last seven decades, the San Francisco System endured many challenges to its continued longevity. This paper posits that a change is necessary to promote and maintain a stable security environment and to peacefully manage a myriad of complex security issues in the shadow of rising Chinese power and influence. Therefore, the United States must modernize the legacy San Francisco System by strengthening existing U.S. bilateral alliances and encouraging the growth and development of strategic multilateral regional partnerships.

For the foreseeable future, regional states will seek to strike a balance between the allure of rising Asian economic markets and the deep-seated strategic mistrust in the presence of a growing China. Subsequently, the actions of an increasingly belligerent China will serve to reinforce the value of the asymmetric security benefits offered by the United States and reinforce the enduring San Francisco System’s hub-and-spoke alliances.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to offer special thanks to my advisors Dr. Robert Antis and Colonel Peter Yeager without whose wisdom, challenge, and direction the ideas presented in this thesis would not have been fully developed. I would also like to thank the great staff of the JFSC Library for facilitating the availability of resources critical to conducting the detailed research required for this thesis.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my amazing wife and children. Each and every day my family inspires me to be a better husband, father, and officer. Without their tireless love and support, this effort would not have been possible.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“The initial task is to bring about in Asia a clearer understanding by both governments and peoples as to where the true peril lies and how security can be won.”*

*~ John Foster Dulles, 1954<sup>1</sup>*

In the wake of World War II and in the earliest moments of a dawning Cold War, the United States (U.S.) sought the opportunity for lasting peace through the diplomatic arrangements, alliances, and partnerships it established to provide regional stability and security. In Europe, the multilateral North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was developed and endures to this day as the dominant regional collective security mechanism. However, in the Asian-Pacific region, while confronting similar regional security dilemmas, such as those presented by Soviet aggression and spreading Communism, an entirely different security system emerged.<sup>2</sup>

Much debate exists among international relations theorists concerning the type of alliance structure established in the post-war Asian-Pacific region. At the conclusion of World War II, U.S. policy makers saw the need to avoid America’s desire to return to its isolationist roots and foreign policy tendencies. Yet, those interested in the development of a multilateral partnership, for building regional prosperity focused on cooperative solutions, met formidable challenge at home and in the region. Binding America to NATO-like Article 5 conditions and a multilateral alliance that levied definitive military commitment proved unpalatable in the Asian-Pacific.

For realists like John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, the issue concerns the United States’ position as a great power and the relative weakness of Asian-Pacific states.

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<sup>1</sup> John Foster Dulles, “Security in the Pacific,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1952): 186.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this paper, the “Asian-Pacific region” will hereafter be defined as the collection of East Asian states bordering the East China Sea (inclusive of Russia) and the South China Sea, as well as, Australia and the United States.

Whether individual nations or as a collective body, the Asian-Pacific states lacked the means to deter external threats. In the post-war aftermath, many of these states were just emerging from the shadows of colonialism and immature institutions and security apparatuses characterized their newly obtained national sovereignty.

Further, a union of these disparate and distant archipelagic states in a multilateral body could not produce sufficient combined regional power or security to balance major states like Russia or China and the threat presented by the spread of Communism. In turn, the U.S. deemed the existing power gap between great and small powers as too large, which consequently, resulted in the inability to form a sufficiently effective multilateral structure of regional states to confront a dominant force.<sup>3</sup> Thus, “in East Asia, . . . the potential was lacking to construct anything but the bilateral security ties on which the United States [had] turned its back in Europe” with the formation of NATO.<sup>4</sup>

The United States, as the new hegemonic leader of the free world, yoked itself with the disproportionate economic and security burdens of regional bilateral alliances in an effort to contain Communism. This handful of key relationships also offered the opportunity for U.S. leadership within a region marked by growing volatility and fragile governments to avoid being pulled into an unwanted war. The burden of these bilateral arrangements “embodied a distinctive bargain: unusual and asymmetrical U.S. *economic* concessions to the host nation, particularly with respect to trade and investment access, in return for unusual and asymmetrical *security* concessions from the United States” to guarantee U.S. regional military presence and geopolitical influence in the unstable

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<sup>3</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> John Gerard Ruggie, "Multilateralism: The Anatomy of an Institution," *International Organization* Vol. 46, No. 3 (1992): 590.

region.<sup>5</sup> For the long-term, the United States offered itself as a powerful economic partner providing unfettered access to Western free world markets and an umbrella of U.S.-provided defense security. What the United States offered came in exchange for the regional influence gained through the strategic access necessary for the positioning of forward military forces.

As a consequence of the complex geopolitical conditions intertwined with U.S. national interests and the grand strategy of containment, a collection of formalized defense alliances and informal multilateral arrangements emerged as the dominant mechanism for U.S.-influenced security and stability throughout the Asian-Pacific region. These bilateral treaties and agreements, designed as a network of “hub-and-spokes,” became the core of the United States’ lasting regional security structure. With Washington, D.C. as the “hub” and Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia as “spokes,” formal alliances and obligatory defense requirements established a perimeter of regional states under the influence of U.S. leadership and a promise of security. This network proved critical to containing the spread of Communism and deterring Soviet aggression for the duration of the Cold War and endures, in some part, to present day.

Ad hoc in nature and organizationally different from post-war Europe and its NATO alliance, the larger informal network of relationships that developed lacked unifying structure or a governing body of rules for cooperative participation in the Asian-Pacific region. Moreover, in the absence of a formal architecture, the core hub-and-spoke

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<sup>5</sup> Kent Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," *The Pacific Review* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2004): 144, <http://www-tandfonline-com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/0951274042000182447> (accessed September 18, 2015). Emphasis in the original.

network functioned with limited collective defense ties or regional security arrangements.<sup>6</sup> Acknowledging the absence of formal structure, John W. Dower coined the existing collection of alliances and arrangements as the “San Francisco System” (SFS) to address the loose informal organization that continues to persist in the absence of any other U.S.-led collective security mechanism.<sup>7</sup> Kent E. Calder further defines the SFS to have the following key features: 1) a dense network of formal security alliances, mainly bilateral, between the United States and key nations of the Pacific; 2) a ‘hub-and-spokes’ network radiating from Washington; 3) an asymmetric relationship of security and economic benefits to those key nations in return for alliance; 4) specific Japanese precedence in terms of economic and security benefits; 5) recognized support for the Japanese peace treaty by other Pacific allies; and 6) extensive economic benefits to security allies through open access to U.S. markets.<sup>8</sup> While the informality of the collective purpose of the SFS has proven resilient for more than 60 years, the evolving geopolitical environment indicates growing challenges to its continued endurance.

Similar to current questions concerning NATO’s long-term mission, the structure and longevity of the SFS also faces substantial challenge to prolonged regional purpose. In its infancy, the SFS encountered the unexpected effects of strategic success. The rebirth of Japan acted as a catalyst for growing regional democracy and liberalization of trade as intended. However, the profound success of Japan’s economic growth and

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<sup>6</sup> John Duffield, "Why is there no APTO? Why is there no OSCAP?: Asia-Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 22, No. 2 (August 2001): 69, <http://www-tandfonline-com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/13523260512331391148> (accessed September 21, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Aftermath of World War II* (London: Allen Lane, 1999). Representative coined the “San Francisco System” after the 1951 conference held at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, California.

<sup>8</sup> Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," 138-139.

eventual challenge to free world markets, coupled with adversely meandering U.S. regional policy, served as stimulants for system decay. Then in the last 30 years, the continued erosion of the San Francisco System stems from three occurrences: 1) the end of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, 2) the 1990s Asian financial crisis, and 3) the rapid rise of China as a threatening major state and assertion as a regional hegemon.

The end of the Cold War and the demise of one of the world's great powers catalyzed a wave of regional prosperity. Without the presence of an overt regional belligerent, the possibility of a peaceful and prosperous world based on principles vice power seemed within reach. Francis Fukuyama argued, "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."<sup>9</sup> However, contrary to Fukuyama's forecast, lasting peace remains elusive, and the threat of a rising challenger in China strains system dynamics and regional relationships. The United States' Asian-Pacific network of bilateral alliances faces the greatest challenge within the construct and endurance of the SFS; yet, that same informal collection of formal alliances persist as the fundamental mechanism of today's U.S. foreign policy and security efforts in the region.

After the passage of over 60 years and significant change within the geopolitical environment, much disagreement surrounds the future of the Asian-Pacific region. Many ask, if the conditions are right for an evolution of the legacy San Francisco System and

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<sup>9</sup> Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* Vol. 16, (Summer 1989): 5, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184> (accessed October 1, 2015).

the United States' security role in the Asian-Pacific? Do these same conditions within the strategic environment dictate more of the same and preservation of the status quo? Or possibly, has the time come for a larger Asian-Pacific regional security order, like that of NATO? This paper posits that to promote and maintain a stable security environment and to peacefully manage a myriad of complex security issues in the shadow of rising Chinese power and influence, the United States must modernize the legacy San Francisco System. This modernization results from strengthening existing U.S. bilateral alliances and encouraging the growth and development of strategic multilateral regional partnerships. After providing a detailed analysis of the formation and 60-year endurance of the SFS, this paper examines the changing geopolitical conditions and the subsequent erosion of the system over time. Finally, it offers recommendations for future system endurance and maturation to answer today's dynamic security challenges and to encourage shared regional prosperity and peace.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SAN FRANCISCO SYSTEM

On 6 September 1951, a conference of 49 allies met in San Francisco to secure a Japanese Peace Treaty and to codify regional security arrangements. In addition, the United States sought a more direct tie to Japan and so forged a bilateral alliance under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, which committed Japan to U.S. military, diplomatic, and economic dependence. Focused on the benefits of an American security guarantee and Western free world markets, Japanese resources became central to U.S. Cold War strategy in the region and provided the United States with a strategic foothold for Western influence and military basing in Northeast Asia.<sup>1</sup> Deliberately linked to the West, Japan became one of the key players in U.S. grand strategy for the containment of Communism and deterring Soviet aggression in the region.

With the strategic cornerstone laid, a more expansive U.S.-designed network for regional security and economic advantage would evolve via a series of strategic arrangements hinging on Japanese post-war recovery. As planned, Japan served as a catalyst for developing regional strength. The recovery placed Japan's economic potential and growth as the centerpiece of the U.S. security network and U.S. interest in the greater Asian-Pacific region. The resultant informal hub-and-spoke system of five key bilateral alliances became an enduring network of U.S. foreign policy relationships during the post-war and the early Cold War period.

Understanding the criticality of Japan as a key element of its regional strategy and in anticipation of the upcoming San Francisco conference, the United States sought to preemptively bolster support from select regional allies known to be distrustful of Japan.

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<sup>1</sup> Steven Kent Vogel, *U.S.-Japan Relations in a Changing World* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 1.

These nations had been subjected to prior colonial and wartime atrocities and were weary of Japan's re-emergence as a major regional power. Also working counter to multilateralism was the “[l]ack of affinity among Asian nations” and the widely varied differences in culture, language, and religion that created a schism prohibitive to cooperation and collective security.<sup>2</sup>

As one of the main architects and principle negotiator of the developing alliance network, John Foster Dulles understood and reinforced the importance and the difficulty of the task to “translate Japan from a defeated enemy into a positive contributor to collective security” against Soviet imperialism and spreading communism in the region.<sup>3</sup> There was a “disrupting fear . . . felt by the peoples whom Japan assaulted that Japan [would] again be an aggressor.”<sup>4</sup> The recent memories of Japanese colonial ambitions and war crimes remained fresh in the minds of prospective regional allies and worked against a larger multilateral Pacific alliance.

Yet, in July 1951 a preemptive trilateral security treaty between Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS) was formalized and served to protect these weary allies. Factoring in the sensitivity and the “[r]eluctance of other nations, particularly Australia and the Philippines, to agree to the development of military strength in Japan . . . ”<sup>5</sup> proved critical to alliance formation. Now with regional momentum and the ANZUS strategic bargain secured, a mutual defense treaty

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific (in two parts)* Volume VI, Part 1, Edited by Fredrick Aandahl, U.S. Government Printing Office, (1951): 35, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v06p1> (accessed November 5, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> John Foster Dulles, “Security in the Pacific,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 30, No. 2 (January 1952): 184.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 184.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific*, 45.

materialized between the United States and the Philippines, providing additional reassurances for a future of prosperity and a non-aggressive Japan.

For the United States, the imperative security task existed in the maintenance of an allied line of containment fortified by alliances with Japan and the Ryukyus, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand protecting America's Western flank. As such, an "off-shore defense line"<sup>6</sup> transpired with a "comprehensive structure of interrelated political-military and economic commitments," intended to stop Soviet imperialism and to contain regional communist expansion in the Pacific during the Cold War.<sup>7</sup> Further, the larger network formed a U.S.-centered regional balance of power and a position where each of these states offered strategic placement for U.S. military forces, access to natural resources, and focused vast populations towards the West. Collectively, the network reduced susceptibility to communist influence and power. Again, the "Soviet control of the off-shore islands in the Western Pacific, including Japan, would present an unacceptable threat to the security of the U.S."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the offshore hedge against Communism's expansion, the U.S. desired to utilize the developing SFS and Japan as the central mechanism for regional security, growth, and influence. The system "ensur[ed] sufficient economic opportunity for Japan that it could serve as a growth engine for the Pacific region as a whole."<sup>9</sup> The United States understood the potential existing within the Japanese ethos and the capability of prewar human, economic, and industrial capacity to lead a democratic post-

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<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific*, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Kent Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," *The Pacific Review* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2004): 136, <http://www-tandfonline-com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/0951274042000182447> (accessed September 18, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific*, 34.

<sup>9</sup> Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," 136.

war regional reset. Also critical to this idea was bringing Japan under the guidance and watchful eye of U.S. power and free world markets, rather than the influence of authoritarian rule and Soviet and Chinese Communism.

Specifically captured within the *Report to the National Security Council 48/5* (NSC 48/5), the U.S. maintained the long-range objective to assist the development of “the nations and peoples of Asia, through . . . self-sustaining non-communist governments, friendly to the United States.”<sup>10</sup> Coupled with this long-term objective were the immediate objectives to “assist Japan to become a self-reliant nation friendly to the United States . . . contributing to the security and stability of the Far East” and promoting the development of “effective security and economic relationships among the free nations” of the Asian-Pacific region.<sup>11</sup> Thus, supporting fledgling democratic governments and the establishment of a system aimed towards producing collective security steered U.S. regional foreign policy for the remainder of the Cold War. If successful, regional states would develop nationalistic self-reliance, will, and the ability to fend off authoritarian expansion, further reinforcing U.S. grand strategy and the global objective to strengthen the free world in a clash against Communism.

NSC 48/5 also outlined objectives for South Korea, Formosa (Taiwan), and French Indochina. In the years following the San Francisco conference, the mutually advantageous negotiation of additional bilateral security agreements with South Korea (October 1953) at the conclusion of the Korean War, and the Formosa Resolution of 1954 with Nationalist China (Taiwan) acted to further secure the growing defensive perimeter of U.S.-supported states and added to the collective architecture of the SFS. Finally,

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific*, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 35-36.

Thailand joined the enduring U.S. hub-and-spoke architecture through inclusion in the Manila Pact, also known as the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, (September 1954). The United States was motivated to secure these regional footholds to avoid the potential growth of Sino-Soviet power and communist expansion in Asia. If left unchecked, the eventual communist control of Southeast Asian states would “run its full course without hindrance.”<sup>12</sup> The potential loss of physical presence, access, and influence in the region would challenge the fate of Japan and “critically endanger United States security interests . . . ”<sup>13</sup> in the Asian-Pacific.

Consequently, the successful U.S. foreign policy actions of “[t]he San Francisco system served much . . . of East Asia well for the post-war era by obviating the need for any significant regional arrangements to manage trade and security relations . . . [and] was a by-product of security-embedded trade relations underwritten by US hegemony.”<sup>14</sup> Specifically during the Cold War, security cooperation coupled with economic development and access to the U.S. economic market proved fundamental to alliance maintenance and the formation of new security mechanisms.

The general argument went something like this: the U.S. security commitment to Asia, as demonstrated by its forward deployment of military forces and underwritten by the five bilateral alliances [spokes], had served as a deterrent to would-be aggressors and provided a stable and peaceful context for the development of security cooperation through multilateral organizations . . . and economic prosperity through the development of free trade regimes while the U.S. served as the primary market for goods manufactured in Asia.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific*, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>14</sup> Min Gyo Koo, "US Approaches to the Trade-Security Nexus in East Asia: From Securitization to Resecuritization," *Asian Perspective* Vol. 35, No. 1 (2011): 45,

<http://search.proquest.com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/docview/867056160/BF4C5C0DD85B4C92PQ/1?accountheid=12686> (accessed September 7, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Carl Baker and Brad Glosserman, "Doing More and Expecting Less: The Future of US Alliances in the Asia Pacific," *Issues & Insights* Vol. 13, No. 1 (February 2013): vi, <http://csis.org/publication/issues>

Bottom line, the United States had opted for individually binding bilateral alliances and the informality of the SFS as the prevailing means to provide regional military presence and geopolitical influence. These bilateral arrangements gave the United States specific unilateral negotiation rights and the ability to deter and prevent individual regional partners from involving America in an unwanted conflict, rather than subjection to the comprehensive obligations of a multilateral NATO-like alliance.

As the Cold War progressed, attempts to establish multilateral architecture came and went without success. The most significant of these efforts appeared to be the spawning of Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), a byproduct of the Manila Pact, which fell to dissolution in 1977. Coupled with the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) and the Asian-Pacific Council (ASPAC), none of these efforts proved effective or lasting in their original form.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, one multilateral organization emerged in August of 1967 and remains to the present day as the dominant voice for regional Asian determinism. Void of direct American participation, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), chartered by Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore, was established with the purpose of regional cooperation in economic, social, cultural, technical, educational and other fields, and to promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice, the rule of law, and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter. These five Southeast Asian nations sought organizational unification and a collective voice, external from the major global powers, committed to resolving regional differences through peaceful means and in the spirit of mutual accommodation.

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[insights-vol-13-no-1-doing-more-and-expecting-less-future-us-alliances-asia-pacif](#) (accessed November 25, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 3.

In the aftermath of the Cold War and with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the evolving opportunity presented by a changing security environment allowed for an increase in multilateralism and the prospect for expanded regional cooperation. Moreover, the critical defense guarantee previously assured by U.S. hegemony and relied upon by regional states for preservation of sovereignty, was no longer perceived to be vital in the absence of the great Soviet threat. Consequently, mutual defense against communist imperialism evolved into the more nebulous role of maintaining collective regional security and stability against lesser threats in the early 1990s. Therefore, the desire for regional security, specifically in Southeast Asia, was easier found through the collective voice of multilateral regional organizations, such as ASEAN, where

. . . multilateral agreements in general [were] designed to enhance transparency in regional relationships; to focus regional and international attention on the economic needs and opportunities of states in the region; to provide fora for the exposure of security concerns to amelioration by the big players, and to draw attention to areas of genuine geopolitical significance such as the south-east Asian archipelago . . .<sup>17</sup>

Even with the fall of the great regional threat and despite general Southeast Asian nations' focus on a growing ASEAN, none of the original SFS members fully abandoned the original framework and the asymmetric benefits that U.S. hegemony provided through security and access to free world markets. Nevertheless, challenges to the original construct of the San Francisco System wore on the long-term viability of the system.

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<sup>17</sup> Kim Beazley, "Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 57, No. 2 (2003): 326, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357710301741?journalCode=caji20> (accessed September 18, 2015).

## CHAPTER 3: CHALLENGES TO THE SAN FRANCISCO SYSTEM

*“American hegemony is receding if only because it is no longer needed to protect the United States against a Cold War-style Soviet military threat . . . In addition, as a maturing civilization, the West no longer has the economic . . . dynamism required to impose its will on other societies . . . ”<sup>1</sup>*

Almost as soon as the groundwork had been laid, the San Francisco System began to encounter the corrosive effects of change and ensuing tests to its long-term endurance. The rebirth of Japan as a regional economic power and the unexpected consequences of growing Asian financial markets, coupled with a meandering U.S. foreign policy towards China, set the conditions for decades of challenge to alliance longevity. Then in the last 30 years, the erosion of the original San Francisco System resulted from the intertwined effects of the end of the Cold War, the U.S. response to the 1990s Asian financial crisis, and the rapid rise of China and its growing perception as a potential regional hegemon.

Early on, alliance destabilization resulted from the unpredicted byproduct of successful Japanese economic growth and Japan’s reemergence as a global economic competitor. With U.S. grand strategy bearing the fruits of success, few predicted the rapidity or the unintended consequences of Japan’s return as a regional influencer. As the cornerstone of the United States’ regional strategy, Japan’s realization as a catalyst for regional growth produced the “smooth post-war transformation of Japan into an affluent yet broadly Pacific nation running huge trade surpluses with the world . . . [and] eroded the original logic of the System.”<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning, U.S. policy makers were wary of Japan’s history of

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 310.

<sup>2</sup> Kent Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," *The Pacific Review* Vol. 17, No. 1 (March 2004): 136, <http://www-tandfonline-com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/0951274042000182447> (accessed September 18, 2015).

economic interdependence with the Chinese and “perceived market access to be vital in assuring Japan’s stability and pro-Western orientation.”<sup>3</sup> The rise of the principal ally as an emerging economic competitor to the United States produced longstanding regional effects. As planned by Dulles and early system architects, the rebirth of Japan acted as the intended regional catalyst, but with contrary and unforeseen consequence. In fact, the success of post-war regional strategy acted to weaken the economic asymmetric lever of the System’s alliance bonds and foreshadowed coming challenges to U.S. regional influence.

The growing democratic, Japanese, liberalized economy, provided the architect’s sought after economic catalyst, but the success and rate of ascendance tested Western free world markets and created tension with the American benefits set forth in the SFS’ bargains. Consequently, the United States realized “Asia ha[d] acquired its own economic dynamism,” and with its success, American influence “diminished.”<sup>4</sup> The rising Asian markets generated direct competition to the free world markets of the West, as the “base of gravity of the global economy . . . shift[ed] from West to East.”<sup>5</sup>

In recognition of growing economic influence and shifting power, Japan began to pursue its own external nationalistic engagement with other regional states outside its dependence on the bilateral alliance with the United States. Japan’s testing of alliance durability would set precedent for limit testing by the other core bilateral allies beyond the asymmetric guarantees provided by America. Japan’s economic adventurism would

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Baker and Brad Glosserman, "Doing More and Expecting Less: The Future of US Alliances in the Asia Pacific," vi.

<sup>5</sup> Douglas Stuart, "San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* Vol. 39, No. 4 (2012): 202.

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00927678.2012.731360> (accessed September 1, 2015).

eventually reach back to China and test U.S. Cold War strategic interests, as America sought out its own path with China. In this case, the treaty assurances allowed Japan to focus primarily on and heavily invest in economic development at the expense of self-defense for which the U.S. guaranteed itself as the principal provider.

In many respects the changes in the U.S.—Japan security relationship after 1951 were the result of Japan attempting to maximize both autonomy and security commitments from the United States, while minimizing risks of either abandonment or entrapment. At the same time, Washington had its own dilemma. Washington was often attempting to maximize Japanese security contributions to the alliance without undermining the asymmetries of the strategic bargain: U.S. bases, no Japanese offensive capabilities, and no Japanese defection.<sup>6</sup>

As the cornerstone of U.S. regional strategy, America would not permit the loss of Japan as an alliance partner. However, the dilemma between growing Asian economic prosperity and the promise of regional security was destined to play out time and again, as allies and partners came to balance the asymmetry of the U.S. bargain and challenge the hub-and-spoke network central to the SFS.

Set in motion by the Japanese example, regional states looked to seize new opportunities for state adventurism and to diversify regional relationships. While the growing Asian economies drew strength from Western markets, they also catalyzed nationalistic maneuvering and a desire for state self-determination. The tacit U.S acceptance of shifting allied economic partnership served the ulterior purpose of promoting regional multilateralism and informal partnerships beyond the hub-and-spoke network of the SFS, while adding yet another dilemma challenging the United States' regional security mechanism.

Growing multilateralism offered diversification of the balance of power in the

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<sup>6</sup> Steven Kent Vogel, *U.S.-Japan Relations in a Changing World* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 14.

region. As put forth by NSC 48/5, America “ . . . required a constant and careful scrutiny of policies and actions on the basis of which decisions . . . [would] advance us toward our ultimate objectives without sacrificing immediate security interests.”<sup>7</sup> Proximate to the core bilateral hub-and-spoke alliances, the evolving purpose, power, and growth of multilateral organizations, like ASEAN, added further complexity to the challenges U.S. policy makers faced throughout the Cold War.

Broadly speaking, the United States’ foreign policy with China and the direction set forth by Washington policy makers progressed through three diverse phases in the latter half of the 20th Century. In the infancy of the SFS, the American grand strategy of containment sought to isolate and contain China, developing a posture of competition without cooperation. Twenty years later, as the war with Vietnam carried on, the “policy pendulum swung far in the opposite direction” and the Nixon administration welcomed an “increasingly close and collaborative strategic alignment with the same country it had once feared and reviled.”<sup>8</sup> America’s policy makers now moved to a cooperative relationship with China. The opening relationship attempted to draw China away from the influence of the Soviet Union without creating the formal bonds of alliance. In doing so, America sent ambiguous signals to its regional allies by not providing clear strategic intent to the core bilateral partners.

Paralleling its budding relationship with China, the Nixon administration released the Guam Doctrine in 1969. Later known as the Nixon Doctrine, this policy aimed primarily at Asia, promoted allied nations in charge of their own security and self-

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific (in two parts)* Volume VI, Part 1, Edited by Fredrick Aandahl, U.S. Government Printing Office, (1951): 42, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v06p1> (accessed November 5, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 59.

defense, yet gave the assurance that in extreme cases, the U.S. would still provide protection under its nuclear umbrella. Not intended to void the security lever of the SFS, this new policy projected the U.S. in an increasing role of defense assistance, not primary provider. Further, it warned of possible movement away from unconditional defense guarantees within the core bilateral alliances. In sum, the U.S. no longer sought to bear the responsibility for all the defense of all free nations, and instead desired the opportunity to promote regional burden sharing by partner nations.

The announcement of America's "One China Policy" served as a third evolution of U.S.-Sino relations. In doing so, U.S. policy makers again sent mixed signals to regional allies and partners through its poorly communicated support for the eventual peaceful integration of Taiwan with mainland China. The vacillating American foreign policy produced spreading fissures in the U.S. Pacific-based alliances and stirred concern for American retrenchment and waning regional reliability. In the wake of the One China Policy, a number of Asia's Southeastern states sought self-protective hedging measures with China should U.S. defense security prove unreliable.

Finally, as the Cold War closed, the U.S. again transitioned its policy position to one of balancing and the careful blending of "both cooperation and competition into a single strategy."<sup>9</sup> The continued bilateral Sino-U.S. cooperation and the "gradual inclusion of China, with its ambiguous security relationship to the U.S., in cooperative regional and global economic arrangements" had further added to the growing perception of declining U.S. credibility and reliability as the primary regional security stakeholder

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 59.

and guarantor of the SFS.<sup>10</sup> From one perspective, “All of America’s security partners in the region have had to cope with substantial shifts in Washington’s grand strategy . . . through fifty years. All have had to calculate the real character of U.S. security guarantees which have been ambiguous, often necessarily and deliberately so.”<sup>11</sup>

With the great Soviet bear defeated and no foreseen threat from China, visible American commitment in a solid U.S.-backed alliance structure was needed now more than ever, as the strategic backdrop for regional engagement and managing the rise of Chinese power.<sup>12</sup> In its absence, regional multilateralism surged. East Asia had suddenly “gained the power to choose to engage with each other in cultivating a close and intense regional harmony and a reconciliation of the past that had been largely shelved during the half century of the Cold War.”<sup>13</sup> The combination of U.S. foreign policy shifts and speculation of retrenchment and confusion concerning America’s regional reliability, added to the dialogue for further development of an intra-regional multilateral framework free from Cold War alliances. Such a drastic change in the geopolitical environment presented the region with “. . . new possibilities and options” to include entertaining post-Cold War “rapprochement with socialist states, including with China.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Calder, "Securing Security Through Prosperity: The San Francisco System in Comparative Perspective," 136.

<sup>11</sup> Kim Beazley, "Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 57, No. 2 (2003): 326,

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357710301741?journalCode=caji20> (accessed September 18, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Vogel, "U.S.-Japan Relations in a Changing World," 26.

<sup>13</sup> Youngshik Daniel Bong, "Past is Still Present: The San Francisco System and a Multilateral Security Regime in East Asia," *Korea Observer* Vol. 41, No. 3 (Autumn 2010): 472.

<sup>14</sup> Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 103.

In summary, Asian-Pacific international politics were

. . . relatively dynamic and unsettled, especially in comparison with Europe. The break up of the Soviet Union and subsequent turmoil in Russia, the rise of China, the strategic retrenchment of the US, . . . and other developments . . . all raised questions about the future trajectory of security relations in the region.<sup>15</sup>

Seizing the moment created by the absence of a definitive security threat and lacking clearly defined U.S. strategy in the region, China began its ascent to challenge the United States as the predominant regional influencer. For the next three decades, China's rise influenced transformation in the region and continued to challenge the legacy relationships of the System's critical 'spokes.'

In 1997, Asian financial markets suffered a devastating blow. While the United States offered limited assistance and further increased speculation of retrenchment, China stepped in as the predominant economic stabilizing force. Consequently, the devastating financial crisis functioned as a “. . . watershed event that transformed the collective identity of Asian countries towards regional institution-building.”<sup>16</sup> The lack of U.S. aid provided an opportunity for the emergence of Chinese soft power and the early makings of a “charm offensive.” China’s leaders sought an image transformation from Cold War oppressor into a constructive, non-threatening regional actor with the ability to influence Southeast Asian countries by persuasion, rather than coercion. The strategic objective of the new strategy was to increase Chinese geopolitical influence and regional political leverage by putting “more emphasis on the importance of economics, foreign investment,

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<sup>15</sup> John Duffield, "Why is there no APTO? Why is there no OSCAP?: Asia-Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective," *Contemporary Security Policy* Vol. 22, No. 2 (August 2001): 69, <http://www-tandfonline-com.nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/doi/abs/10.1080/13523260512331391148> (accessed September 21, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Bong, "Past is Still Present: The San Francisco System and a Multilateral Security Regime in East Asia," 479.

technological innovation, and the ownership of natural resources.”<sup>17</sup>

With the transformation in Chinese strategy, the timing of the 1997 financial crisis also proved important. As the United States “became less interested in multilateralism, . . . China’s participation in multilateral groups . . . made it look better by comparison” and offered multilateral security cooperation as an alternative to the SFS bilateral hub-and-spoke allies.<sup>18</sup> The resulting byproduct of China’s rising influence was the ASEAN +3 forum. This forum, formed under the auspices of preventing another regional economic crisis, encompassed ASEAN’s member nations (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia) plus China, Japan, and South Korea.

While not completely void of U.S. influence maintained through its bilateral allies, the new ASEAN +3 did not provide the United States with a direct voice to the forum. Further, it leveraged escalating allied and partner concerns about U.S. staying power in the region and prompted some countries in ASEAN to inch closer to Beijing. Within this evolved multilateral structure, China successfully added to the weakened U.S. influence and projected itself in regional cooperative diplomacy “focused on selling the idea that China [would] not be a threat to other nations . . . [and] reinforced the concept of peaceful development.”<sup>19</sup>

In 2001, the United States began the prolonged period of persistent focus toward the Middle East and combatting terrorism worldwide. With the United States distracted, China seized a window of opportunity and furthered its pursuit of better relations with

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 47.

<sup>18</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, “China’s Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia,” *Current History: A Journal of Contemporary World Affairs* Vol. 105, No. 692 (September 2006): 272.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 273.

many Southeast Asian nations by using an aggressive combination of diplomacy, trade, and foreign aid. Through charming its neighbors, the Chinese desired to change the status quo in favor of a broader, regional multilateral framework wherein China would play a prominent role by leveraging its growing economic power.

The subsequent efforts to boost China—ASEAN interconnectedness, in the first decade of the new century, were well received. Regional leaders accepted China's non-threatening message and promise of economic prosperity, as governments across Southeast Asia struggled to maintain growth in the darkening shadow of China's ascendance. Timing again proved important during the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, because memories of the last time China extended a similar gesture were still fresh in the minds Asian-Pacific leaders.

This time, China came knocking just as large ASEAN economies . . . fac[ed] structural problems that could hamper their long-term growth potential. But China [was] no longer a competitor with Southeast Asian countries for export markets, as it was in the 1980s and 1990s; it [was] now the market to which ASEAN countries want to be connected.<sup>20</sup>

Beijing again demonstrated savvy and skill in its ability to use economic leverage to craft policy toward ASEAN. The result was increased multilateralism absent U.S. participation, while Washington faced “intense criticism by Asian governments—including its principal friends and allies in the region—for its [poor] handling of the 1997 Asian financial crisis and for its role in the 2007-2008 global financial crisis.”<sup>21</sup>

The meteoric rise of Chinese economic power and Asian trade markets heavily influenced all Asian-Pacific regional states and a changing balance of power with the

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<sup>20</sup> "China's Charm Offensive Signals a New Strategic Era in Southeast Asia," in Center for Strategic and International Studies [database online]. Washington, D.C. 17 October 2013 [cited 2015]. Available from <http://csis.org/publication/chinas-charm-offensive-signals-new-strategic-era-southeast-asia>.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart, "San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia," 203.

United States in the last two decades. While far from being replaced as the dominant regional power, the United States lost substantial pull and influence. Trying to counter the pendulum of balancing power, “many long-standing mutual security arrangements have undergone significant changes, ranging from dissolution to revitalization.”<sup>22</sup> Chinese market influence and regional proximity now carried much of the economic allure that U.S. markets previously held. The powerful draw of huge market potential, economic prosperity, and an emerging strength of Chinese military force provided a gravitational effect challenging weakened Western markets and eroding U.S. influence.

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<sup>22</sup> Duffield, "Why is there no APTO? Why is there no OSCAP?: Asia-Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective," 69.

## CHAPTER 4: THE TEST OF TIME – ENDURING CHARACTERISTICS

*“For more than half a century East Asian nations have relied on the U.S. security umbrella and close economic ties with Washington in pursuit of their political, economic and security objectives.”<sup>1</sup>*

At the outset of the Cold War, the strategy applied by the United States in the Asian-Pacific region represented geopolitics on a grand scale. Weary of formal bonds and entangling requirements, the U.S. sought to “[em]place a compromise vision of transparent, stable regional security and economic relationships to underpin a new global order.”<sup>2</sup> In fact, the same enduring objective for regional peace and prosperity, catalyzed by liberal free market growth under the watchful eye and guarantee of U.S.-led defense security, remains in place today.

At the foundation of the San Francisco System remain five key bilateral alliances with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia that withstood the test of time. Moreover, the role and “relative weight” prescribed by the United States to these allies played central to the enduring regional balance of power.<sup>3</sup> While the core network of the SFS endures, the path through history was laden with challenge. Today, as in the early 1950s, System durability results from what is lacking and will not be resolved in the darkening shadow of a rising regional challenger. The absence of a significant regional collective security mechanism continues to accentuate the importance of America’s defense guarantee and the enduring legacy of the SFS.

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<sup>1</sup> Elena Atanassova-Cornelis, "Shifting Domestic Politics and Security Policy in Japan and Taiwan: The Search for a Balancing Strategy Between China and the US," *Asia-Pacific Review* Vol. 20, No. 1 (May 2013): 55, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13439006.2013.793066> (accessed September 9, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Kim Beazley, "Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 57, No. 2 (2003): 325,

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357710301741?journalCode=caji20> (accessed September 18, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 325.

As China continued to rise throughout the last two decades and its once charming behavior turned to increasingly belligerent territorial aspirations and assertive military posturing, the asymmetric guarantee of U.S. hard power, with renewed policy and security commitment, proved its value as the fundamental element of System endurance. In contrast to America's Atlantic partnerships, ". . . Asia lacks what the EU possesses in terms of power parity among major powers, economic scales and affluence, and political heterogeneity . . . . Asia's potential for collectively governing regional security is deficient . . . ."<sup>4</sup> Even though regional power disparity and collective defense capability gaps closed slightly, the disparity remains too great to exist without U.S. leadership and defense presence.

In the Northeast, alliances with Japan and South Korea, and the guarantee of security that the United States military offers in exchange for strategic regional positioning, "were—and remain—critical."<sup>5</sup> Japan persists as the United States' most significant binding relationship tracing back to the alliance origins designed by John Foster Dulles. The continuing importance of Northeast Asia's geographic proximity to Russia, China, and North Korea, and the democratic relationships with Japan and South Korea are "arguably regarded as more integral to core U.S. strategic interests than its Southeast Asia counterpart[s]."<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, like the original importance placed on the Northeastern bilateral alliances, the enduring security relationships with the Southern states of the Philippines,

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<sup>4</sup> Youngshik Daniel Bong, "Past is Still Present: The San Francisco System and a Multilateral Security Regime in East Asia," *Korea Observer* Vol. 41, No. 3 (Autumn 2010): 474.

<sup>5</sup> Beazley, "Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?" 325.

<sup>6</sup> William T. Tow, *Assessing US Bilateral Security Alliances in the Asia Pacific's Southern Rim: Why the San Francisco System Endures*, (Institute for International Studies, Stanford University, 1999): 6, [http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10013/Tow\\_Final.pdf](http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10013/Tow_Final.pdf) (accessed 12 November 2015).

Thailand, and Australia remain fundamental components of maintaining an offshore perimeter and strategic regional positioning for U.S. forward military presence. Still important to regional interests, the alliances and partnerships in Southeast Asia serve a broader and more “diffuse” purpose.<sup>7</sup> These partnerships offer indirect U.S. influence to ASEAN’s regional policies, and while more distant from Beijing than U.S. allies to the North, the archipelagic regional states also continue to offer the United States key regional defense positioning. Moreover, these partnerships provide geographic access critical to strategic trade routes and sea lines of communication stretching from the Indian Ocean, through the South China Sea, and into the Pacific Ocean. Together, these defensively postured partners independently and collectively lack the military capability and resources to fend off the territorial aggressions of a major rising power presented by China.

The recasting of Chinese relations with Russia by “probably the most substantial arms control agreement, . . . of the 20th century [was] the delimitation of arms on the Sino/Russian border and the reinforcing of agreements on non-interference and non-aggression between China, Russia, and the Soviet Union’s successor Muslim republics in Central Asia.”<sup>8</sup> This historic agreement allowed China to shift strategic focus and resources to Southeast Asia and the South China Sea, altering the future of Pacific balance of power dramatically. Lacking transparency, the rapid expansion of military force and accompanying East China Sea and South China Sea territorial disputes stirred emotions and increased regional fear among its Pacific neighbors.

In 2010, as one example of growing regional concerns, Prime Minister Kan of

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<sup>7</sup> Beazley, "Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?" 325.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 330.

Japan, trying to balance a mutually beneficial strategic relationship with China, stressed domestically that U.S. military presence in Japan was an “important deterrent” to counter China’s growing military modernization, intensifying maritime activities and lack of defense transparency, which constituted a “matter of concern for the regional and international community.”<sup>9</sup> The 2010 incident involving the collision between a Chinese fishing vessel and Japanese Coast Guard vessels in the East China Sea, further emphasized the necessity of alliance endurance and allowed many Japanese leaders to rediscover the “ongoing value” of Tokyo’s ties with the U.S.<sup>10</sup> In light of China’s assertiveness in the East China Sea, the reaffirmation of the U.S. commitment to treaty obligations by the Obama administration served to reassure security cooperation between the U.S. and Japan.<sup>11</sup>

China’s brazenness challenged the goodwill of its charm offensive and acted as a reinforcing function for the necessity of bilateral mutual defense commitments throughout the Asian-Pacific. “With shifting regional power balance amid China’s rise, and especially as the People’s Republic of China (PRC) . . . [became] the driver of the region’s economic dynamism, Asian nations . . . started to reconsider their strategic options.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, questions of U.S. credibility remained.

Seeking to assert a renewed American regional commitment, the Obama administration initiated the 2011 foreign policy rebalance to demonstrate America’s faithfulness to regional reliability and the key spokes of the SFS. Demonstrating renewed commitment to America’s allies worked to strengthen the bilateral spokes and helped

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<sup>9</sup> Atanassova-Cornelis, "Shifting Domestic Politics and Security Policy in Japan and Taiwan: The Search for a Balancing Strategy Between China and the US," 62.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 56.

restore credibility in U.S. provided mutual security. Douglas Stuart, writing in *Asian Affairs* regarding the U.S. rebalance, notes it would be a “mistake” to discredit the enduring assets of the SFS stating, “Washington can derive confidence . . . that most Asia-Pacific governments still see a liberal international order as their best guarantee of prosperity and security and still accept the indispensability of U.S. leadership . . .”<sup>13</sup> Further demonstrating the strength and faithfulness of the enduring relationship, “In 2013, partly in response to China’s increased regional bullying, the United States and Japan agreed to broaden their security alliance, again in an effort to demonstrate America’s determination to remain a key player in the region.”<sup>14</sup>

As the region’s members continue to fear growing Chinese military power, and its threat to their national interests, none of them are likely to continue long-term accommodation of China. Even under the pressures of Asian domestic politics, the tension between economic engagement and entanglement, and “deep-seated strategic mistrust,” will result in continued balancing between regional states and China.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the United States will remain pivotal to Asian-Pacific dynamics as a regional economic leader and the primary security provider for America’s allies and partners. In fact, prior member of the Australian House of Representatives, Kim Beazley emphasized that the SFS continues to endure, because “from the perspective of America’s Pacific allies, whatever the changing power equation it has never altered in a way that suggests that the United States is not a useful balancer of last resort.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Douglas Stuart, “San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia,” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* Vol. 39, No. 4 (2012): 203.

<sup>14</sup> Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 206.

<sup>15</sup> Atanassova-Cornelis, “Shifting Domestic Politics and Security Policy in Japan and Taiwan: The Search for a Balancing Strategy Between China and the US,” 72.

<sup>16</sup> Beazley, “Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?” 326.

## CHAPTER 5: APPLICATION TO THE 21ST CENTURY

*“Our ability to achieve national objectives in Asia will be conditioned by the capabilities and global commitments of the United States and by the weight of the effort the enemy is willing and able to make. Consequently, there is required a constant and careful scrutiny of policies and actions on the basis of which decisions can be made which will advance us toward our ultimate objectives without sacrificing immediate security interests.”*  
~ NSC 48/5, 17 May 1951<sup>1</sup>

*“Any successful strategy to ensure the safety of the American people and advance our national security interests must begin with an undeniable truth—America must lead.”*  
~ 2015 National Security Strategy, President Barak Obama<sup>2</sup>

*“American leadership is not the same as American hegemony.”*<sup>3</sup>

Significant disagreement about the shape and future of the global international community exists. Will the world exist in a bipolar condition similar to the Cold War? Will it exist as a multipolar world dominated by a few key powers as it was before World War I? Or could it possibly devolve into a non-polar community where no single entity holds a preponderance of power? Whatever the outcome and specific to the Asian-Pacific region, the United States will remain the principal regional influencer through the maintenance of the “indispensable” arrangements within the existing bilateral hub-and-spoke relationships and evolving multilateral framework of the Cold War.<sup>4</sup>

Collectively, the asymmetric benefits of the legacy San Francisco System endure. However, it must undergo revision to address seven decades of geopolitical change and today’s complex regional challenges. From the U.S. perspective, modernization of the SFS will maintain much of the original character, purpose, and structure envisioned by

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1951. Asia and the Pacific (in two parts)* Volume VI, Part 1, Edited by Fredrick Aandahl, U.S. Government Printing Office, (1951): 42, <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v06p1> (accessed November 5, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. President, *2015 National Security Strategy*, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, February 2015), Preface.

<sup>3</sup> Douglas Stuart, "San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* Vol. 39, No. 4 (2012): 202.

<sup>4</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 280.

the early architects of the system. This chapter will address recommendations for the future of the SFS in the context of the current strategic environment and evolving international community in the Asian-Pacific region. These recommendations stem from the material presented and the analysis of shifts in the strategic environment, which the SFS has withstood through time.

It cannot be overstated: America's regional leadership and inclusion as a Pacific nation must continue as the central tenant of U.S. strategy and influence. Yet, "U.S. strategy for the Asia-Pacific will have to take into account the very strict limits imposed on U.S. foreign and defense policies by America's relative economic decline."<sup>5</sup> Through the eyes and actions of its regional allies and partners, U.S. influence has deteriorated and Washington is no longer able to prescriptively impose solutions and singly dictate the path forward. Nevertheless, America's "[s]trong and sustained" leadership will provide critical guidance and direction on the path towards a rules-based international order and an environment conducive to global security and prosperity.<sup>6</sup> Now four years in the past, echoes of President Obama's Canberra speech, announcing the U.S. rebalance in the Pacific, find root in the 2015 National Security Strategy emphasizing, "The question is never whether America should lead, but how we lead."<sup>7</sup>

Through highly nuanced, diplomatic, intergovernmental, and military leadership, the perspectives and objectives of regional partners and allies must be heard and factored into the defined regional end state. Accordingly, U.S. leadership must transition from a

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<sup>5</sup> Stuart, "San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia," 202.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. President, *2015 National Security Strategy*, Preface.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.; Reference full text of 2011 Canberra Speech at: White House Office of the Press Secretary, *Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament (November 2011)*, Canberra, Australia, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament> (accessed October 10, 2015).

realist position of zero-sum balance of power dynamics and unilaterally-directed, regional solutions, which were embedded in the original SFS construct, to a responsive give-and-take relationship aimed at providing shared regional solutions. The voice of America's Asian-Pacific allies must receive acknowledgement and consideration, if the United States expects continued access and increased regional burden sharing.

This change will not downplay U.S. strength, but manifests itself in a liberalist shift, which empowers regional alliance partners as valid contributors and offers nonthreatening capabilities and encouragement for cooperative, interdependent systems aligned with stated U.S. foreign policy guidance. Guidance such as the Department of State 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, aims to "establish a stable security environment, an open and transparent economic environment, and a political environment that respects universal rights and freedoms."<sup>8</sup>

The modification in narrative tone and reliance on evolving regional partnerships to address common global challenges subtly indicate the recognition of a shift in balance of power dynamics and acknowledge U.S. domestic constraints. Moreover, shared leadership, increased partner capability, and empowered key regional players provide strategic flexibility within a future SFS construct without forfeiting actual U.S. presence and influence. These changes reinforce regional objectives that promote economic development and integration of liberalized open markets, manage tension over territorial disputes, and encourage transparency in regional military activities.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, as the United States moves to adapt the legacy SFS to evolving political conditions and to maintain a security environment in line with stated national interests, policy makers must

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of State, *FY 2014-2017 Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan*, Washington DC: Department of State, 2 April 2014.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 19.

work hand-in-hand with all regional players to craft a shared future vision. This future seeks balance and stability, recognizing “the principal responsibility of Western leaders, consequently, is not to attempt to reshape other civilizations in the image of the West, which is beyond their declining power, but to preserve, protect, and renew the unique qualities of Western civilization.”<sup>10</sup>

Weary of over 15 years of persistent conflict in the Middle East and with cooperation in the Asian-Pacific region at “unprecedented” levels, America lacks the desire and domestic support to disburse additional national treasure without direct, unambiguous threat to its vital national interests. With continued fiscal austerity ahead and to avoid entangling itself further, the United States will not seek to grow beyond the existing key strategic treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Philippines, Thailand, and Australia. These five alliances will remain the “cornerstone” of strategic positioning and the core touch points for U.S. presence and security interaction within a larger evolving multilateral collective security network in the Asian-Pacific.<sup>11</sup>

The reliability of the American defense guarantee has been questioned in the past, because of the perception of waning U.S. regional commitment. Policy makers must be aware of knowingly or unknowingly jeopardizing fragile relationships by placing allies and partners in a position to choose between Washington and Beijing. Over the last three decades, the alliance partners found themselves at a crossroads between the allure of huge Chinese trade partnerships and a growing security dilemma, where China’s lack of transparency and aggressive regional actions helped shift alliance momentum by

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 311.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, *FY 2014-2017 Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan*.

portraying an “arrogant, aggressive China that provokes its neighbors . . .”<sup>12</sup>

By answering the aggressive Chinese territorial ambitions with a rebalance of U.S. military forces, America’s commitment to the regional security guarantee reaffirmed the viability of existing alliances and partnerships of like-minded countries, which “aids America in the long term.”<sup>13</sup> For the future, America must be mindful that her friends and allies willingness “to continue working with it will depend, . . . on their reading of its capabilities and intentions.”<sup>14</sup> The United States must carefully seek increased burden sharing of collective security measures by the core allies and multilateral partnerships. This is not to indicate U.S. intent to remove itself from regional security solutions, but addresses the reality of continued U.S. fiscal austerity by promoting rising interdependence and prosperity within the region. Moreover, the United States seeks to strengthen its allies for greater multilateral interoperability and effectiveness in times of natural or man-made crisis.

Regarding the core bilateral alliances, the United States must seek high interoperability between U.S. forces and regional security partners, participation in growing joint and multilateral exercises, and increasing responsibility for collective regional defense. In the archipelagic states, due to lasting state power imbalance and enduring disparities in regional militaries, these principal burden-sharing efforts should encompass plans to build self-defense and non-kinetic (e.g. humanitarian aid) capabilities beneficial to the entire region. While the Southeast Asian states will remain fundamentally dependent upon the San Francisco System’s original security guarantee,

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<sup>12</sup> Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 231.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 231.

<sup>14</sup> Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, 213.

they continue to provide valuable influence and access to an increasingly contested region.

Beyond America's core alliances and partnerships, from here forward, its most important bilateral relationship will be with China. China's economic rise and resurgence as a great power has solidified its position as a regional influencer for the foreseeable future. In turn, U.S. national leadership and policy makers, joined with its regional friends and allies, must work together "not only to make room for Asia in the international system but to make room for China in the Asian region."<sup>15</sup>

Chinese regional influence will continue to rise, though how fast is unknown. Yet to ensure the future peace and prosperity of the region, America must lead through mediation and a "nuanced mix" of liberal economic *engagement* and competition with bits of Cold War *containment*.<sup>16</sup> Also known as "congagement," this non-doctrinal foreign policy approach to China's emergence has been in practice throughout the most recent four presidencies. Further, it remains the best means of managing China's rise while "awaiting the eventual liberalization of China's domestic political institutions."<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the balancing act between increased engagement via trade and the containment of perceived belligerent actions, with hard military power and forward presence, will remain America's best instrument for influencing fundamental change in China.

In parallel, foreign policy makers on both sides must promote transparent dialogue to facilitate better understanding of intent for regional goals and prosperity. For the United States, this should be a dialogue in keeping with the original objectives, laid

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<sup>15</sup> Stuart, "San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia," 203.

<sup>16</sup> Charles A. Kupchan, *No One's World: The West, the Rising Rest, and the Coming Global Turn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 201.

<sup>17</sup> Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, 252.

out by John Foster Dulles and the early architects of the SFS, encompassing a strategy pointed toward multilateralism and linking the rising heavyweight to regional prosperity through transparency and cooperative security. Realistically, “without discounting the threat posed by China’s enhanced capability to project military power beyond its borders, . . . Beijing has a growing stake in an orderly and predictable international system.”<sup>18</sup> If communicated correctly, an opportunity exists for the United States to shape and manage the peaceful rise of Chinese power and to encourage China to make positive contributions to collective Asian-Pacific issues.

Moreover, enduring disparity in the regional balance of power will be prohibitive for the near-term achievement of an Asian NATO-like structure. However, policy makers must be looking for the time when it “. . . might be possible for the San Francisco System to gradually evolve from a thick cord composed of complex bilateral strings into a set of building blocks for an overarching multilateral system.”<sup>19</sup> Under the auspices of an ASEAN Plus construct, a dialogue should begin for the future of an Asian-Pacific system interested in the common good (e.g. human rights, climate/environmental preservation, and protection of the global commons). This organization would promote responsible behavior under the rule of law through collaboration and inclusiveness in a greater multilateral organization.

In this future system, the United States, as a Pacific nation, must have a seat at the table consistent with the necessity for continued regional leadership. If and when such a dialogue should begin, Washington should overtly “. . . discourage its friends from

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<sup>18</sup> Stuart, “San Francisco 2.0: Military Aspects of the US Pivot Toward Asia,” 207.

<sup>19</sup> Youngshik Daniel Bong, “Past is Still Present: The San Francisco System and a Multilateral Security Regime in East Asia,” *Korea Observer* Vol. 41, No. 3 (Autumn 2010): 478.

placing undue reliance on organizations that deny it a place at the table”<sup>20</sup> Whether an alliance member or one of many regional partners, messaging must be clear that there can be no future acceptance of a prevailing regional construct void of U.S. participation and leadership.

In the absence of a prevailing multilateral organization, the United States must work to integrate Asia’s democracies, for “[t]he absence of a region-wide grouping of some kind is an historical anomaly, the result of distance and a divergence in strategic perspective between Northeast and Southeast Asia, as well as an abiding post-war animosity in both regions toward Japan.”<sup>21</sup> Some say, “Time heals all things.” In keeping with this notion, the time is right for U.S.-led mediation of historical colonial, territorial, and cultural reconciliations. The process will be arduous and likely to stir Asian nationalistic grievances, but “[l]ack of strategic coordination is a luxury that the democracies can no longer afford.”<sup>22</sup> Now in the shadow of an aggressive regional power, alliance countries must put aside historical tensions, which may be leveraged to incite tension and discord between partner nations.

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<sup>20</sup> Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, 283.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 282.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

*“It is in Asia where the United States will face its largest geopolitical challenges in the years ahead.” ~ Former Chairman Jim Leach of the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific<sup>1</sup>*

In keeping with John Foster Dulles’ original design, a peaceful and prosperous Asian-Pacific region will rely upon U.S. leadership and the San Francisco System’s core bilateral hub-and-spoke alliances for the foreseeable future. In the 21st Century, reassuring the network of enduring alliances and expanding multilateral partnership serves to ensure long-term stability offered by steadfast U.S. leadership and regional security defense. Regardless of its turbulent history, the San Francisco System will continue to function as the foundation for U.S. relations in the Asian-Pacific region, as “the United States remains the guarantor of last resort.”<sup>2</sup>

In the last half of the 20th Century, the perception of declining U.S. influence and shifting foreign policy added to the volatility of the region and challenged the SFS’s construct. Today, America’s enduring bilateral alliances must be updated to demonstrate strength and commitment to long-standing relationships, as illustrated between Japan and the United States in 2013. The Northeastern bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea remain critical footholds for the hub-and-spoke system. Democratic influence and economic dominance of Northeast Asia coupled with the physical geographic proximity to China, Russia, North Korea, and the South China Sea represents a vital foothold for U.S. national interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Opening Statement, Representative James Leach, Chairman, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Hearing on “America and Asia in a Changing World,” September 21, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Beazley, “Whither the San Francisco Alliance System?” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* Vol. 57, No. 2 (2003): 337, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10357710301741?journalCode=caji20> (accessed September 18, 2015).

With Japan and South Korea as linchpins in the Northeast, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia continue to serve as the southern boundary in a regional strategy balancing liberal economic engagement and Cold War containment to manage growing Chinese regional influence. In the South, power imbalance and limited collective defense capability drive the regional necessity for the continued asymmetric security guarantee presented by the United States. However, to address growing tension between the system's outdated pledge and economic reality, the United States must promote greater ally burden sharing and interoperability. Further, efforts must concurrently assist with enhancing regional crisis response capabilities and modernizing defense forces, while still maintaining the promise of security where partner means fall short. In the context of a rising Chinese aggression, these updates to the legacy San Francisco System act to solidify a regional security and crisis response network seeking to peacefully manage the fragile balance of power dynamics.

From afar, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century San Francisco System appears as little more than U.S. maintenance of the status quo regional security mechanism. However, subtle nuances in American foreign policy reflect liberalist changes to the character and purpose of the System. While an element of Cold War containment is necessary for the occasional rebuke of aggressive action, the updated SFS principally aims to assist with the peaceful integration of China as a constructive regional contributor. Furthermore, an enduring System recognizes the significance of Sino-U.S. interactions as America's most important regional relationship. The intent of the United States' future engagements with China requires clear communication with enduring allies and regional partners to avoid the misperceptions of the past. Moreover, U.S. policy makers must carefully analyze the

fragile strategic environment to avoid putting allies in a position that compels picking sides, compromises U.S. defense positioning, or risks upsetting the regional balance.

Finally, U.S. foreign policy and the near-term maintenance of the key alliances and partnerships must remain committed to the original long-term objective for increased regional integration manifest in multilateral organizations. As multilateralism spreads, direct U.S. leadership and presence is imperative. Utilizing all instruments of national power, American engagement in evolving multilateralism must promote regional interdependence designed to produce shared prosperity, economic growth, and a stable, conflict averse security environment for the Asian-Pacific community of nations.

For now, there is no immediate threat of a rising China eclipsing U.S. regional influence or the network of bilateral alliances and multilateral partnerships that is today's San Francisco System. While America cannot fully know China's long-term intent, it can be certain that the Chinese are students of history and they understand that China's continued growth of power and regional influence "... requires America's goodwill and assistance"<sup>3</sup> to avoid major conflict in the Asian-Pacific region. Consequently, from its study of the "lethal mistakes" made by the post-war Soviet Empire a "... buildup by a rising power that threatens the old hegemon comes at the very end of the story . . . . To launch a real global challenge to American military power must be postponed if China continues to follow the ancient model. . . . any of this done too soon would be [catastrophic]."<sup>4</sup> Therefore, an updated San Francisco System will remain America's dominant policy mechanism in the volatile region and will endure any strategy by Beijing to overtake the United States as the region's primary influencer and guarantor of security.

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<sup>3</sup> Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015), 231.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 195-196.

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## **VITA**

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Shelton was commissioned into the United States Air Force through the Reserve Officer Training Corps in 1996, following graduation from Virginia Tech. He is a Command Pilot with over 2700 hours total flying time, earning ratings as a KC-135R/T evaluator pilot and a C-5A/B instructor pilot. Lt Col Shelton served tours at Grand Forks AFB ND, Dover AFB DE, and Seymour Johnson AFB NC while flying in support of Operations ALLIED FORCE, ENDURING FREEDOM, and IRAQI FREEDOM. In his previous assignment, he commanded the 99<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Squadron, a Total Force Associate Squadron under the 117<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, Birmingham Air National Guard, Birmingham AL. Prior to command, Lt Col Shelton served two separate tours at Headquarters Air Mobility Command, Scott AFB IL with duties in the A3: Operations, A5/8: Plans & Programs and the 618 Air Operations Center, Tanker Airlift Control Center. During his first headquarters tour, Lt Col Shelton participated in the AMC Commander's PHOENIX HAWK leadership development program. For intermediate developmental education, he attended U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, at Fort Leavenworth KS. In addition to his professional military education, Lt Col Shelton holds a Masters of Aeronautical Science in Management and Aviation Safety from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.